Analyzing Theme in “All Summer in a Day” Lesson Plan

Standards

1. **RL.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

2. **RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. **RL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

4. **L.9-10.6** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Procedures

This lesson is best done after you read “All Summer in a Day.”

1. **Discuss theme.** Take a look at the notes below. This can be part of note-taking or just a discussion.

2. **Fill out the chart.**

3. **Discuss student discoveries** with a small group and/or full class discussion.

4. **Optional:** Write a theme analysis of “All Summer in a Day.”

Assessment

The graphic organizer is an excellent opportunity to practice and discuss the lesson’s stated objectives. In most cases it should be considered a formative assignment. In order to determine individual student mastery, there are questions on the short story quiz (included). A theme analysis writing assignment would also suffice.
Notes on Theme

Students should be familiar with the following information in order for your theme lesson plan to be effective:

- Theme is the central idea or message in a literary work. It is an observation about human life.
- Themes are rarely stated directly. They must be inferred.
- The theme is revealed by the way characters change in a story, conflicts in the story, and statements made by the narrator or characters.
- Understanding theme involves understanding plot, characters, and setting.

Strategies for Teaching Theme

1. Discuss Plot by analyzing cause and effect and identifying major and minor conflicts.
   
   Example: The continuous rain makes the children anxious for the sun.

2. Analyze character motivation by noting which characters are dynamic and which ones are static. Look for evidence regarding character motives. Evaluate the character’s personality.
   
   Example: The children in the class hate Margot because she is different. They lock her in a closet.

3. Visualize setting by evaluating what effect the setting has on the characters and on the mood of the story.
   
   Example: The miserable conditions on Venus lead to all sorts of neurotic behavior.
Short Story Activity: Theme

- **Theme** is the central idea or message in a story. Themes are usually expressed as generalizations about life.
- **Universal themes** are lessons or ideas that apply to different cultures, places and time periods.

**Directions:** Use the chart to determine the theme of the literature you are reading. First, record what the topic or subject of the story is. Next, answer the following questions and determine the theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Title:</th>
<th>Topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the protagonist (main character) change throughout the story?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the story’s main conflict resolved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the title of the story suggest?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Statement of the theme:**
### Short Story Activity: Theme

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- **Universal themes** are lessons or ideas that apply to different cultures, places and time periods.

**Directions:** Use the chart to determine the theme of the literature you are reading. First, record what the topic or subject of the story is. Next, answer the following questions and determine the theme.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Selection Title: “All Summer in a Day”</th>
<th>Topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does the protagonist (main character) change throughout the story?</strong></td>
<td>At the beginning of the story, the children treat Margot horribly. They’re emotionless and cruel. While playing in the sun, they experience joy. When the rain returns, the children are remorseful for their behavior. They experience empathy. It’s as if they realize how horrible it must be for Margot. This emotion is not something they were capable of before the sun appeared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is the story’s main conflict resolved?</strong></td>
<td>The conflict between the children and Margot is partially resolved, insomuch that the children no longer feel the jealousy and animosity toward Margot. This change, however, comes with a price. They have deprived Margot of a priceless childhood experience, an experience lost forever. It is difficult to tell how Margot will react to this cruel act. She could forgive. She could go Carrie and exact revenge by locking the classroom doors and killing everyone. Most likely, she will remain scarred for life. But at least the bullies are no longer bullies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does the title of the story suggest?</strong></td>
<td>Summer, like childhood, is short and should be cherished. The fact that Margot misses out on summer suggests that she does not experience childhood. This missing out on childhood joy can be compared to the experience of an immigrant or the experience of a bullied child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement of the theme:</strong></td>
<td>Children mature. Bullying hurts the bullied and the bulliers. Empathy is necessary to stamp out bigotry, hatred, and racism. It’s common to look back in life and wish you’d been kinder. That’s a trait of a mature person. Let’s go to the beach!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a complete list of lesson plans, check out the ELA Common Core Lesson Plans catalogue.

Teacher Ready. Student Ready.